

VZCZCXRO5325
PP RUEHBL
DE RUEHDL #0071 0491212
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 181212Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9767
INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2592
RUEHBL/AMCONSUL BELFAST 0882
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS DUBLIN 000071

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EWWT](#) [EPET](#) [EFIS](#) [SENV](#) [EI](#)
SUBJECT: OIL SPILL THREATENS THE COAST OF IRELAND

¶1. (U) On February 14, through the use of aerial pollution surveillance equipment, the Irish Coast Guard spotted an oil spill 50 miles off the south coast of Ireland. At the time, the spill measured 2.8 miles by 3.1 miles and was located close to a Russian aircraft carrier and a tanker. The Irish Coast Guard is working with its British counterpart to monitor the spill.

¶2. (SBU) On February 18, Econoff spoke with John Fearon, Director General of the Irish Coast Guard in the Department of Transport, about the oil spill. Fearon estimated that there are about 500 tons of oil in the water and that it is still on the surface. He said that the Irish government had contacted a representative from the Russian Embassy in Dublin who admitted that a Russian aircraft carrier was being refueled in the area and confirmed the existence of oil in the water but did not confirm that the spill was a result of the refueling operation.

¶3. (SBU) Fearon said the Irish and British Coast Guards have been monitoring the situation since the governments first became aware of the spill on February 14. He does not believe that the oil can be recovered and expected the spill to take up to 16 days to reach the Irish coast. He could not predict where the spill would strike the coast. At this point, the Irish Coast Guard cannot say how much oil will eventually reached land, but Fearon said he, "would be surprised if none reached the coast."

¶4. (U) The spill is located south of Ireland's second largest city, Cork. Other than Cork, the southern coast is sparsely populated but tourism and fishing are both important industries in the region. Depending on weather conditions, the spill could move east affecting the port city of Waterford and eventually the coast of Wales.
FAUCHER